

Venerable tree doomed

Likely winner of Ashland tree poll stands in path of library expansion

By **MARK FREEMAN**
of the Mail Tribune

ASHLAND — The 55-foot ginkgo tree outside the city's public library is not particularly tall, old or big for its species.

The summer foliage is plenty attractive, yet it yields a fruit that smells more like the land mines in Ashland's dog park than the aesthetic offerings of April.

But this 88-year-old ginkgo is clearly the sentimental stem of choice in Ashland's annual exercise of honoring one of its more artistic arbors.

The ginkgo is a leaves-down favorite to win Tree of the Year honors in Ashland this week. Odds are just as good that the tree will be gone soon in the name of civic progress.

Planned expansion of the public library likely will gobble up the ground where the ginkgo was planted in 1912. City officials say it appears too expensive to build the new library around the tree, or move the ginkgo to a spot not so over-booked.

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— **Colin Swales**
Ashland activist

“From what I've seen at this point, it looks pretty clear that the ginkgo will win,” says Robbin Pearce, the keeper of the city's official tree ballots. “It's gotten way more votes than we normally get.”

“But it won't save the tree,” she says. “Unless there's a redesign of the building, I'm pretty convinced it's going to come down.”

Tuesday's announcement of Tree of the Year honors, a highlight of Ashland's Arbor Week festivities, will be like a deciduous version of Lou Gehrig Day at Yankee Stadium — one last hurrah for a fan favorite.

“Instead of hanging the ribbon around it, you take a chainsaw to it,” says Colin Swales, an Ashland activist who wants the tree saved. “It's a big deal in Ashland. You know how Ashlanders are.”

Since 1989, Ashland residents have helped honor Arbor Week by voting one particular

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A campaign to honor this ginkgo tree at the Ashland library may not be enough to save the 88-year-old tree from the saw, when the library building is expanded. Arborist Pete Seda says the tree should be moved.